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Books in The News

Spies With Blindfolds

By WILLIAM MURCHISON

THE CIA AND THE AMERICAN ETHIC (Ernest W. Lefever and Roy Godson; *Ethics and Public Policy Center, Georgetown University, Washington, D.C.*; \$9.50 hardback, \$5 paper, 161 pp.).

INTELLIGENCE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE 1980s: Elements of Intelligence (Roy Godson, ed., *National Strategy Information Center, Inc., Washington, D.C.*; unpriced, 122 pp.).

"WHEN IS the great public debate about intelligence going to begin?" asks communications consultant Charles W. Lichtenstein in an afterword to Lefever and Godson's fine and much-needed book.

When indeed? The country has debated, yea unto exhaustion, the CIA's sins and excesses. It might be refreshing if we got around to talking about the part that an intelligence agency plays in a democracy.

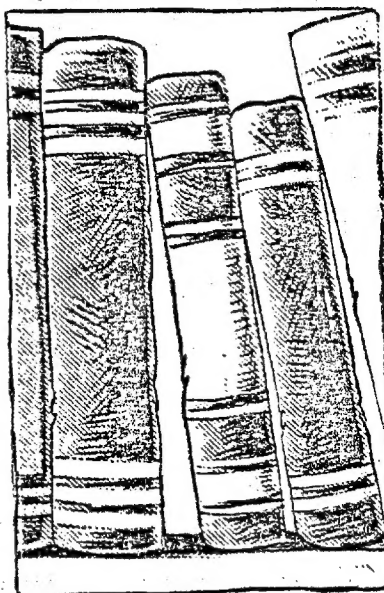
"Are foreign intelligence operations — clandestine collection, counterintelligence and covert action, all of which require secrecy and sometimes deception — compatible with the American ethic?" Such is Lefever's opening query. To which he replies, yes, most certainly.

YET HOW would one reach such a conclusion, meditating on the CIA as we came to know it in the late '70s? It would not be easy. The debate on the CIA, as Lefever and Godson demonstrate, has been 1-sided, to say the least.

Investigating the CIA in the '70s, Congress squinted into a vacuum. Absent from the vacuum were such considerations as (1.) CIA successes, as opposed to highly publicized failures, (2.) our enemies' intelligence capabilities and (3.) the uses of counterintelligence. It is small wonder, perhaps,

that Congress subsequently fastened so many shackles so tightly about the CIA's legs — commanding, among other things, that covert operations be reported to eight congressional committees.

Likewise the country's "anti-intelligence lobby," in Godson's phrase, is "openly dedicated to the abolition of virtually all clandestine



intelligence capabilities and operations."

"The lobby," writes Godson, a Georgetown University professor, "apparently sees no danger to American civil rights or to Third World aspirations from the intelligence services of the Soviet Union and other 'leftist' countries."

Nor has TV evening news much enhanced the quality of the intelligence debate. Hardly ever, during the height of the debate, 1974-78, did TV report on Soviet spying, as Lefever discovered. "The CIA appeared to be operating in a political and moral vacuum devoid of threats and adversaries. It was a villainous Don Quixote tilting at vaporous windmills."

A brisk and highly useful book we have here. Thus does Lefever's

Ethics and Public Policy Center maintain its reputation, earned over the last few years, for publishing some of the best books on the great questions having to do with Western survival.

There has been no debate, either, as Godson points out in *Intelligence Requirements for the 1980s* over what kind of intelligence the United States needs in upcoming years. Godson's symposium of intelligence experts endeavors to answer the question

IT APPEARS that covert action, "now a dying art-form," in the words of Hugh Tovar, who once ran the CIA's covert action staff, needs reviving. Tovar notes how effective such activities were in the past and speculates on modern uses for them now — e.g., evacuation of a threatened embassy.

Decentralized in recent years, the CIA's counterintelligence capability is in bad shape, argues Newton Miler, once our principal counterintelligence man. We know and understand far less than we used to about what goes on behind the Iron Curtain.

Samuel Halpern, another former CIA official, is for getting back to the job of "clandestine collection" (spying). To which end he suggests giving oversight of the CIA to, at most, two congressional committees and rebuilding badly damaged relationships with foreign intelligence services.

So here is yet another book with insights into the major job ahead for America, assuming it wishes to profit from a thriving, well-run and well-informed intelligence operation. The book should interest anybody who wonders what's going on with the CIA, now that the tumult and the shouting have died down a little. The answer is as simple as it is shocking: Not much of anything is going on.